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The Golden Road
Verses original and translated

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The Golden Road

Verses original and translated

By
William Blathwayt



SECOND ENLARGED EDITION

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In Memory of Charles John Odinel Daubeny

YEARS speed upon their course, yet neither Death
Nor Time can sever those whom Love has bound,
It is not he that lies devoid of breath
Beneath the flower-strewn ground.

Seek not for him you knew near mournful tombs,
But seek him rather in the perfumed air,
In each bright summer rose that buds and blooms
He loved the sweet and fair.

And seek him most of all within the heart—
The heart of those to whom his life has set—
So shall you find what Death can never part
Nor human love forget.

A l'Amie fidèle

(Translation by J. D. E. Harter)

LES siècles passent, mais ni le Temps ni la Mort
Ne peuvent désunir deux âmes immortelles
Que l'Amour réunit ; ce n'est pas lui qui dort
Sous les tertres fleuris ou les lugubres stèles.

Ce n'est pas lui qui dort dans un étroit cercueil
Ou dans l'immensité d'un riche mausolée ;
Séchez vos pleurs ; quittez vos vêtements de deuil ;
Il est là, près de vous, pauvre âme désolée.

Il est là ! Cherchez-le dans l'étoile qui fuit
Rapide, tel l'éclair qui sillonne la nue ;
Dans l'astre au front d'argent qui rutille la nuit
Et se mire, en jouant, dans la vague éperdue.

Cherchez-le dans l'espace infini, dans la fleur
Que le soleil d'été tous les ans fait éclore ;
Dans la brise embaumée, ou plutôt dans le cœur
De celle qui l'aima, le pleure et l'aime encore !

Preface to the Second Edition

THE exhaustion of two impressions of this book within ten months of the date of its first publication, and the demand for a third, has been a source of considerable gratification to me.

I much value the kind criticisms that have reached me from all parts of the world relative to my work, and I especially appreciate the reference made to me by Sir Robert Stout in the *Dunedin Evening Star* of 7th March, 1928 ; also letters received from the Librarian of the Public Library, Valletta, Malta ; and from the Warden of the Gordon Memorial College at Khartoum.

I wish further to express my thanks to Mr. J. D. E. Harter, Chairman, Carnegie Board of Directors in the Seychelles, for the charming French translation he has made of my dedicatory poem, which I have his permission to include in the present edition.

At the request of various friends I have added, in an appendix, certain verses selected from two privately produced pamphlets, " From the Twilight " and " The Giant's Plaything," both of which have been out of print for several years.

WILLIAM BLATHWAYT.

BATHEASTON.

Sept., 1928.

Preface to the First Edition

MANY of the verses included in this selection have already appeared in the *Bath Chronicle and Herald*, and I wish once more to offer my thanks to that journal for the courtesy and kindness which it has invariably extended to my work.

My thanks are also due to the Rev. G. E. Watton, Vicar of Holy Trinity, Combe Down, for permission to photograph the Memorial Window in that Church to the late Charles John Odinel Daubeney, who lost his life in the War. This photograph appears as the frontispiece to the present book.

I have concluded my book with a few free translations and paraphrases from French and German poems, and my acknowledgments are due to the Authors and Publishers of the following anthologies—

Deutsche Lyrik (Maximilian Bern).

Album der neuern deutschen Lyrik (F. A. Brockhaus).

Hausbuch deutscher Lyrik (Ferdinand Avenarius).

Album deutscher Kunst und Dichtung (Friedrich Bodenstedt).

Anthologie des Poètes du XIX^e Siècle (1800–1866)
(Georges Pellissier).

WILLIAM BLATHWAYT.

BATHEASTON,

Dec., 1927.

Contents

	PAGE
DEDICATORY POEMS	5 and 6
PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION	7
PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION	8
TRANSMUTATION	13
THE THREE ANGELS	14
THE TRIBUTE	15
PEACE	16
COME BACK	17
SUN AND SHOWER	18
NATURE'S STORIES	19
THE VALUE OF WORDS	20
CHANCE	21
SHAM WINDOWS	22
VIEW FROM A LONDON WINDOW	23
FORGET-ME-NOT	24
A LAY SERMON	25
IN MEMORIAM	26
THE PAPER BASKET	27
EDUCATION	28
REVENONS À NOS MOUTONS	29
THE HUMBLE BUMBLE	30
SHAKESPEARE AND BACON	31
MOUNTAINEERING	32
ANNO DOMINI	33
SOPHIA MARIA JEMIMA	34
THE CHALLENGE	35
URSA MAJOR	36
THE HOANG-HO	37

Contents

	PAGE
STAR PICTURES	38
THE BALHAM FLUTE-PLAYER	39
AT AN OLD INN	40
CROSSING THE FIELDS	41
FOUR BATH STREETS	42
THE LAND SAILOR	43
MRS. BROWN AND THE INFLUENZA	44
MRS. BROWN AT THE ZOO	45
MRS. BROWN FETCHES THE COAL	46
THE CENTRAL HEATING APPARATUS	47
TO THE WORKERS	48
COMMON SENSE	49
LAST YEAR'S FIRE	50
A FUNNY DREAM	51
DISSIMILARITY IN NATURE	52
THE WATER CHUTE	53
THE PROPHETS	54
LIGHTING A FIRE	55
A PARADOX	56
WHEN SUMMER-TIME ENDS	57
EVOLUTION	58

Translations

	PAGE
A SONG OF LOVE	59 ¹
THE NUN	60
THE CATS	61
A SPARROW'S PETITION	62
THE TWO WRESTLERS	63
THE ANTIQUE MIRROR	64
THE OLD MAN	65

Appendix

THE FORGER.	67
THE HOUR OF SORROW	70
TO A PIECE OF BATH OOLITE.	71
THE SILVER STREAK	72
THE MOUNTAIN	73
THE KEY	73
THE THREE CATSPAWS	74
A CHLORIDE OF SODIUM STORY	75
IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 2D. POST	76
TAKE THINGS AS THEY COME.	77
THE LITTLE PHILOSOPHER	78
THE ARABS AND THE DEVIL	79
L'ENVOI	80

The Three Angels

I MET three spirits all surpassing fair,
A glorious light shone ever in their eyes :
The first approached me with a solemn air
Of perfect trust too deep to criticise,
Her name was Faith ; when she approached I felt
This is the angel of the highest worth ;
Yet she but murmured sweetly as I knelt :
“ Love is the greatest thing in Heaven or Earth.”

The second spirit had a happy mien,
Her lightest smile appeared to me divine,
Lips more enchanting never have I seen,
I trembled as she placed her hand in mine.
Her name was Hope ; I felt my whole heart stirred ;
She gazed upon me with a look of mirth,
Then spoke to me—these were the words I heard,
“ Love is the greatest thing in Heaven or Earth.”

The third then followed, modest and demure,
With loveliness beyond all human praise,
Clad in transcendent light so deep and pure
I closed the eyes I did not dare to raise ;
Her voice seemed almost as the voice of God
Bringing old worlds through death again to birth
I bent and kissed the ground on which she trod :
Love is the greatest thing in Heaven or Earth.

●

1

Letters of gold inscribed on marble tombs
Perchance are ornaments of shallow love,
Cold recognitions of a formal kind ;
The grave this little yew-tree grew above
May be a spot where purest feeling blooms
From deep emotions in the heart and mind.

Peace

DURING storms the waves of the sea run high,
So in the storms of life do the passions of men ;
But after the gale has broken, clouds soon fly
And, bright on the mast, we see the sunshine again.

Angry looks should be as the clouds that fade
And melt away in the infinite depths above ;
Angry thoughts should be as a passing shade
On the deep, calm ocean of Love.

Come Back

Oh Love, dear Love ! come back to the world and me ;
Kindly deeds and generous hearts grow few,
Tenderness cannot exist apart from thee,
But selfish thoughts and bitter words ensue ;
Each man is ready enough to claim his own
But not so ready to lend a helping hand ;
The folk are wooing pleasure, and joy has flown ;
A gloomy cloud is falling over our Land.

Sheer brute force has usurped the throne of Right,
Men argue hotly, but are they always just ?
Alas ! too often in an angry fight
Self is the gleaming idol in which we trust.
Rich and poor we all are human alike,
And all are steering our boats on an unknown sea ;
Where should we stand if God were to go on Strike ?
Oh Love, dear Love ! come back to the world and me.

Sun and Shower

If any man should sow a field with grain,
It matters not how excellent the soil,
It would not grow without the help of rain,
And his would be but lost and wasted toil.
Or if it always rained, the corn might grow
But could not ripen for the want of sun,
The rain would beat it down and lay it low
And all would rot before the year had run.
If on our paths no tears of sadness fell
We could not win to mental force and power ;
Nor if no laughter came would things be well
For lives require a mingled sun and shower.
Grudge not your dear ones' tears, but see that after
These have been shed you wake their smiles and
laughter.

• Nature's Stories

- If only once in every thousand years
The buds burst forth as now they do each Spring
If only once we heard the thrushes sing
Or felt the cuckoo's note fall on our ears ;
Or if the brilliant sun should only set
Once in an age, or if the starry skies
Had up till now been hidden from our eyes,
With what astonishment they would be met.

But men have come to know these things so well
They lose the interest that they ought to feel
And grow half callous to Life's greater glories.
Oh ! let these marvels hold you in their spell :
What never-failing wonders they reveal
Of living Nature's wild romantic stories.

✓ The Value of Words

A word is like a diamond uncut
That lies among the pebbles of the earth ;
The many pass it, knowing not its worth,
To tread and grind it in the common rut.
But when the poet comes he takes the word
And in his hands it grows a sparkling gem ;
He uses it to form a diadem
To crown that Love by whom his heart is stirred.

A word is like the paints that artists use,
So very little in itself, and yet
So glorious when its work has been achieved.
It may be simply one of many hues,
But when upon the glowing canvas set
It speaks the thought the poet's soul conceived.

Chance

I HEARD a speaker say the other night
That Fortune does not come through chance or luck ;
And certainly in part the man was right,
Fortunes are built through patience, skill and pluck.
Nevertheless this is not wholly so,
No matter what one's skill or how one strives
Fate sometimes strikes the wisest men a blow,
And Chance does play a part in all our lives.

Possibly even turning down one street,
A random choice out of a dozen ways,
May be the act that causes us to meet
Some friend that changes all our future days.
It is not often that such things occur
But now and then the unsought fact arrives,
And that is why we safely may aver
That Chance does play a part in all our lives.

However self-reliant men may be,
However clever and however strong,
If such declare they make their destiny,
The claim no matter how preferred is wrong.
Much they have done and much they still may do,
As long as healthy fortitude survives ;
But, all the same, the simple fact is true
That Chance does play a part in all our lives.

And so, Dame Fortune, charm us with your smile,
For while you smile upon a man he thrives ;
But to deny your power is infantile,
For Chance does play a part in all our lives.

Sham Windows

LAST week I passed along a country lane
Before a house whose windows were of stone ;
Yet to its builder glass was clearly known
For he had coloured in each separate pane.
The object was not easy to explain,
For all around it lay a glorious zone
Of undulating land quite overgrown
With lovely woods—it was a fair domain.
These windows mark the blindness of an age
When men could tax the very source of health,
And shut out Nature's glorious light and air.
A noble house was made a gloomy cage
To add to—what ?—The general commonwealth ?
Poor vacant, blank old windows how they stare !

View From a London Window

QUAINT chimney-pots are showing weird and gray
In the dull light of London's dawning day ;
There is a certain character in all,
Some short and squat, and others lank and tall,
Some fresh and new, some leaning in decay.
They really make a ludicrous display
Seen from the window stretching far away,
Rank behind rank, draped in their smoky pall,
Quaint chimney-pots.

It were no easy matter to portray
The curious picture that I now survey ;
They do look so like men ! Some great, some small ;
One on a house, another on a hall :
They stare at me and I at them, and say :
Quaint chimney-pots.

Forget-Me-Not

"FORGET-ME-NOT"—that is a striking way
To name a flower unless to grace a lay ;
Doubtless there is some legend, if one knew.
But legends it would seem are seldom true
In spite of all romantic writers say.
Still it is good when things are looking gray
To see amidst the grass some summer day
Deep in the blades an exquisitely blue
Forget-me-not.

Since you have left me whom I longed to stay,
What better gift than just a floral spray
With one fair blossom of an azure hue
To crown this little bouquet culled for you,
That it may cry for ever and for aye
"Forget-me-not ?"

A Lay Sermon

WE must agree to disagree at times ;
Not that I hold all argument distasteful,
Men argued in all ages and all climes,
But spending words in quarrelling is wasteful.
Hear what is said, say what you have to say,
But tune your voice to no unfriendly key.
Speak as though every day were Christmas day ;
Ere tempers rise agree to disagree.

The food of one is poison to another.
I know not why, but there you have the fact.
So never force a quarrel on your brother
Because he does not act as you would act ;
Give him your views and stay to hear his own,
Then let the Truth be final referee :
But what if Truth cannot be clearly shown ?
Why then you must agree to disagree.

How sorry are the scenes in history's pages,
The discord and the bloodshed and the strife,
Simply because mankind throughout the ages
Could never learn the need for Love in life ;
Love is a star—calm, placid and quiescent
That shines forever down on life's rough sea ;
But mortal aims and creeds are evanescent
On these we should agree to disagree.

Let not this call for kindness pass unheeded,
I do but weakly voice great Nature's plea ;
Yet should you think the plea itself not needed—
In that we must agree to disagree.

In Memoriam:
Sir Edward Marshall-Hall

(Died 24th February, 1927)

A SHADOW lies upon the Bar to-day
For stern inexorable Death has come ;
A brave great-hearted man has passed away,
 A well-loved voice is dumb.
His was a type in which our Land feels pride,
And one that claims from us a tear ;
His words were kindly as the world is wide,
 Eloquent yet sincere.
I lay this humble tribute on his grave :
" It was his work and province to defend ;
The best he had to give he freely gave,
And Mercy claimed him as her dearest friend."

✓ The Paper Basket

How many letters bad or good,
How many verses dull or clever,
What articles misunderstood
Of honest, though misjudged, endeavour,
How many pages scribbled o'er,
How many—ah ! one well may ask it—
Have found their way for evermore
Into the gaping paper basket ?

There, in that quaint old lumber-room,
If one could rummage through the ages,
Should we not sometimes find the tomb
Of buried thoughts of unknown sages ?
Out of ten thousand gems of paste
We might unearth some golden casket,
And find amid the dust and waste
A diamond in the paper basket.

Education

(Views of a child who doesn't like school)

In school we take a pencil and slate,
Or sit and read some fable :
We swot up rules that we simply hate
And the multiplication table.

We have to know the dates of kings
And the names of scores of places ;
In grammar we learn all sorts of things
Relating to numbers and cases.

We have to learn the way to spell,
And do not find it amusing
That " till " takes two and " until " one " l,"
And other things just as confusing.

Finally after a dreary day,
And after much trouble and weeping,
We carry one grain of learning away !
Is the harvest worth the reaping ?

Revenons à Nos Moutons

It was in a French examination
The phrase in this title was met :
" Give what you think a correct translation "
Was one of the questions set.

A student whose knowledge of French was small
Looked at it greatly distressed ;
He could not understand it at all,
But decided to do his best.

" For," thought he, " if I fail, I fail !
And no one can always succeed."
He then constructed the following tale,
Which any who wish may read :

" Two shepherds out on the mountain steep
Felt cold in the wind and the rain,
They therefore determined to quit their sheep,
And never be shepherds again.

" And so they tended the pigs instead,
And had to clean out the sties ;
But when the heavens grew blue overhead
They felt they had been unwise.

" ' In pigs,' said one, ' I can take no pride,
They always strike me as gluttons !
I long to be back on the mountain side—
Let us return to our muttons.' "

The Humble Bumble

Two scientists fell out one day .
Over the naming of a bee,
Which of two words we ought to say
Caused them at once to disagree :
One said the proper word was " Humble,"
The other urged it should be " Bumble."

Just as they grew so cross and hot
It seemed they could be friends no more,
A roving bee passed near the spot
And hummed : " What are you fighting for ?
Why do you quarrel over me
Who am a humble bumble-bee ? "

Shakespeare and Bacon

I WAS at Calne in Wiltshire yesterday
On pleasure bent, and so it rained, of course,
And mist completely hid the famous horse—
The Cherhill one—but that is by the way.
Well ! here I met a pink-white pig astray
Upon the road, a pig of much resource
Out all upon his own ; I felt perforce
Obliged to have a chat with him and say :
“ Oh, Mr. Pig, ours is a tragic fate,
Ours is a life of mingled joy and sorrow
In which both faith and hope are often shaken
Strait is the way and narrow is the gate ;
I never can be Shakespeare, but to-morrow
You may and very likely will be—bacon ! ”

Mountaineering

(By a stout man)

SOME folk have scaled the glittering Matterhorn,
Or hewn ice steps on Monte Rosa's side,
Linked up with ropes, mere human specks forlorn,
Amid great glaciers stretching far and wide.
Why ! even Everest has now been tried,
Since Alps are of their pristine glory shorn ;
This Earth will soon have little left to hide ;
Where will the climbers climb as yet unborn ?
To mountains like the Alps I lay no claim,
Such fields of snow mine eyes have never scanned,
Nor have I heard the bitter tempest shriek.

I am contented with more modest fame ;
Yet scorn me not, Bathonians, for I stand
Breathless on ¹Twerton Round Hill's lofty peak.

¹ The local name for High Barrow Hill, a conical eminence overlooking Bath, 467 feet high.

Anno Domini

(The lament of an old man)

THE passing years have borne my strength away
And left me open to the rheumatism,
Of every microbe I become the prey,
I lose my early, cheerful optimism ;
Were I not bald my hair would now be grey ;
My teeth grow weak—I ask the dentist why,
And this is all he condescends to say :
“ There is no cure for Anno Domini.”

The sports I used to love I have to drop,
Because my breath has now become so short
That in two minutes I am forced to stop ;
I dare not venture on a tennis court.
My sight grows dim—again I seek for aid,
The best the best optician can supply,
I grumble at the glasses he has made :
There is no cure for Anno Domini.

At parties I still join in conversation
Yet cannot hear as well as once I heard ;
But that which causes me most aggravation
Is that I often now forget some word !
I hate to think my memory is failing
Each time I falter when I make reply ;
My doctor says, when asked what there is ailing :
“ There is no cure for Anno Domini.”

L'ENVOI

Ye boys and girls be happy while ye may,
Seize upon joy before it passes by ;
For we are all but creatures of a day :
There is no cure for Anno Domini.

Sophia Maria Jemima

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet."

SHAKESPEARE, *Romeo and Juliet*.

I MET in the meadows a golden-haired maid,
She sat on the grass with the tears in her eyes:
"Have the others been teasing you, dear?" I said,
She sobbed and exclaimed to my deepest surprise,
"Sophia Maria Jemima."

"I think my godparents were perfectly horrid
Or how could they choose such a horrible name?
Nobody likes it," she cried, turning florid,
"The other girls laugh, and I call it a shame—
Sophia! Maria! Jemima!"

Then gently I took her small hand in my own
And told her the words that are quoted above:
"Not merely by names can a person be known,
It is not the names but the persons we love,
Sophia Maria Jemima."

The Challenge

" I CHALLENGE you to find a rhyme
For lobster," so the letter ran.
The poet, having mused some time
Without success, at last began
To think the question was absurd :
" I'm sure," quoth he, " there's no such word."
• He took a walk to clear his brain
Along a lovely country road :
He looked around, but all was vain ;
His mind still bore a weary load,
And would keep clamouring all the time :
" A rhyme for lobster—find a rhyme."
And so he came to lose his way,
Till half confused and in despair
He asked two little girls at play :
" What is that village over there ? "
Yet still his brain throbbed " lobster ! lobster ! "
" The village, Sir ?—Why, that be ¹Vobster."

¹ Vobster is a small village in Somerset, two miles south of
Mells Road Station.

Ursa Major

ONE starry night a visitor appeared
And knocked at an observatory door,
A stately traveller with a long grey beard,
Quite civilly he raised the hat he wore :
" Sir," he explained, " I'm not an idle tripper
And hope you will not think me much to blame,
But I should like so much to see the Dipper—
Though every star to me looks much the same."

The telescope was pointed to the sky,
It showed the double star in the Great Bear ;
The man seemed pleased with what he could descry
And offered thanks with quite a courtly air.
Upon the following night he knocked again
Remarking to the watchers when he came :
" I'd like to have a look at Charles's Wain—
Though every star to me looks much the same."

The double star was shown to him once more ;
He gazed intently uttering not a word ;
On the next night he rapped upon the door
Regretting that his visit was the third :
" I'm sorry, Sir, to trouble you, but now
There is one thing I long to see—the name
If I remember rightly was the Plough—
Though every star to me looks much the same."

The telescope was pointed to the sky,
The double star was once again its aim :
" I thank you kindly, Sir," then with a sigh :
" Though every star to me looks much the same."

(NOTE. The Dipper, Charles's Wain and the Plough are various names for the same constellation.)

The Hoang-ho

THE Yellow River is a mighty stream,
To wild Tibet we trace its primal source ;
Looking on such a river who would dream
That any power could make it change its course ?
Yet the Hoang-ho ere 1852
Turned southward near Kai-fung and issued forth
South of Shan-tung, but now what does it do ?
It passes through the province to the north.
We smile as Chinese leaders chop and change
Party allegiance—first they're here, then there ;
One never knows on which side they will range
The forces they command ; we stand and stare !
How can we understand mere human tides
In lands where even rivers change their sides ?

Star Pictures

THE men of old had strong imaginations
For they could see strange creatures in the sky,
Animal forms in many constellations,
Dragons and dogs, and horses that can fly.
To me, alas ! the stars are points of light,
I know not the Dog's tail-end from his muzzle. '
Though possibly by gazing long, I might
Regard the Heavens as a Cross-word Puzzle.
What can you make of Ursa Major now ?
Three crooked stars and a distorted square !
Perhaps it does look something like a Plough
Just as a Plough looks something like a Bear.
Still we must acquiesce in what is done,
Nothing can seem quite right to everyone.

. The Balham Flute-Player

• THERE is a man who in his youth
Wished to become a great musician,
Although, one must confess, in truth
• He had less talent than ambition ;
He bought a flute of mellow tone
And played to everybody near him,
But very soon he was alone,
For somehow no one wished to hear him.

And now he wanders through the streets
And warbles many a touching ditty,
He holds his hat to all he meets,
But no one thinks his music pretty :
“ You poor old man, I wonder how
It was you ever took to fluting ?
For though you play in Balham now,
You’ll never get to Upper Tooting.”

At An Old Inn

THE sign-board swings with every gust of air,
And gives a sort of rasping, moaning note,
Till sitting in the twilight one could swear
That there were ghosts abroad. The phantoms float
Intangible, unseen, from room to room,
Along the still, deserted corridor,
To fade away at last amidst the gloom
Of dreary garrets on the top-most floor.
But in the Twentieth Century a ghost
Finds less respect than in the days gone by ;
It lives ignored alike by guest and host,
For no one troubles at its mournful sigh,
And not one even thinks it worth the toil
To exorcise it with a drop of oil.

. Crossing the Fields

**LITTLE brown streamlets trickled and ran
Across the muddy track
When I chanced to meet an aged man,
Wearing an ancient sack.**

**He touched his cap with a skinny claw,
His beard was long and gray ;
And almost with a sense of awe
I heard that old man say :**

**“ Zur, I be eighty-seven this week,
But never can I remember
Since first my mother learnt I to speak,
Such a turrible moist November.”**

Four Bath Streets

IN dull November's chilly days, .
When coughs and colds grow bad,
We wonder as we wend our ways
Why Gay Street looks so sad ;
Or when the creeping motor cars
Too-toot at all they meet,
We marvel that such jolts and jars
Exist in Quiet Street.

A gloomy cloud is in the air,
The fog comes drooping down :
It almost fills us with despair
When Green Street looks so brown ;
And then to cap our other woes
The thought that comes is this :
“ I wonder if the Council knows
How narrow Broad Street is ? ”

The Land-Sailor

I HAVE walked where the waves are blue,
I have walked where the waves are green,
I have passed the day where water is gray
Or brown and far from clean :
But the White Sea and the Red Sea,
And the Black Sea and the Yellow Sea,
Are seas I have never seen.

I have visited Poole in the South,
I have travelled to Aberdeen,
And Weston at the Severn's mouth,
Yea, verily there have I been !
But the White Sea and the Red Sea,
And the Black Sea and the Yellow Sea,
Are seas I have never seen.

Mrs. Brown and the Influenza

LAST Saturday in Union Street
Whom should it be my lot to meet
But Mrs. Brown, a little pale ;
A thing I saw with some regret
Since she is usually hale :
" Good morning to you, Mrs. Brown,
I haven't seen you in the town
For weeks and weeks, so glad we've met."
" Ah ! Zur," she said, " and that be true,
I've been abed with this 'ere Flu.
Me joints and muscles wur so sore
I never thought to rise no more :
And then me head did ache and swim
Till everything looked sort of dim :
I wur so bad that there I lay
A-doing nothing all the day :
And then at night the doctor came
And gave the thing a funny name ;
A summut Cocks-eye it wur, he said :
He told me I must stop in bed :
And t'wur the only thing to do,
One can't stand up to this 'ere Flu."

Mrs. Brown at the Zoo

OUR much respected Mrs. Brown
Has just come back from London Town.
She went up there, and at the Zoo
She saw a lively kangaroo,
The lions and a bear or two.
Then, after she had viewed the fish,
Old Mrs. Brown expressed the wish,
Before she closed a well-spent day
To view the monkeys at their play ;
But as she couldn't find the way
She asked a keeper, tall and grey :
" Sir, would you kindly show to me
The entrance to the—Apiary ! "

Mrs. Brown Fetches the Coal .

KIND reader, you will feel, I know,
Deep sympathy with Mrs. Brown :
She made her way some days ago
To buy a little coal in town ;
She crammed it in an old string bag,
Some fourteen pounds—or maybe more—
But just beyond the Lamb and Flag
The bag gave way with all her store.
Old Mrs. Brown was really cross,
She said it put her in a stew !
For she was wholly at a loss
Whither to go or what to do.
To make things worse the rain came down
And gave us truly English weather—
“ I’ll take ’em all,” yelled Mrs. Brown,
“ And knock their silly heads together ! ”

(NOTE. This and the following five pieces were written during the Coal Strike of 1926.)

• The Central Heating Apparatus

CASTING a glance around my room
I feel my thoughts grow strangely sober,
• The objects wear a look of gloom,
The days are short—it is October ;
The furniture is all in place
And yet there seems one strange hiatus,
A sadness takes me as I face
The Central Heating Apparatus.

But why, you ask, should I be sad,
Is there a reason for my sorrow ?
There is, indeed, and let me add,
The weather may turn cold to-morrow ;
The pipes are sound and all complete
And yet the thing has lost its status :
We have no coal wherewith to heat
Our Central Heating Apparatus.

To the Workers

YOUR Land has reared through centuries of toil,
A busy, prosperous and a thriving folk,
They are the rulers of their native soil
And bow their necks beneath no foreign yoke ;
Her sons have sailed from every seaport town,
And founded homes that fill our hearts with pride,
And should you hurl this work of beauty down
There is no surer form of suicide.

A man can change plain economic fact
No more than he can make the moon stop dead ;
The laws of both are fixed, no human act
Can alter either by one single shred ;
And those who will run counter to fixed laws,
Laws absolute that cannot be defied,
Are fighting vainly in a hopeless cause,
There is no surer form of suicide.

There was a ship once, far from any shore ;
Men say her crew, for what they thought was right,
Declared that they would sail the waves no more
But sink the ship to end their horrid plight ;
And when the ship was sunk, and Captain drowned
And they could see but water far and wide
They felt that they had gained their point—and found
There is no surer form of suicide.

Get back to work ! Your fathers were no fools.
That which you try, men have already tried.
Still—if you tire of life—break all their rules,
There is no surer form of suicide.

Common Sense

SOME people spend their lives in search of power,
And seek to rise above their fellow men,
Wholly forgetting that there comes an hour
When all that they have won is lost again.

Some persons strive for scholarship and learning—
The knowledge such acquire may be immense—
But there is yet more wisdom in discerning
That Nature's greatest gift is Common Sense.

Some people claim to be unfairly treated
And envy others born to greater wealth,
Yet even while they think themselves thus cheated
Have greater strength, perhaps, or better health.
Some persons wish to change the Constitution,
Go back ten thousand years and re-commence,
But quite forget while pressing this solution
That Nature's greatest gift is Common Sense.

It is not power or wealth or even knowledge
That makes us worthy members of our race ;
The character we build in Life's great college
Is won by working wisely in our place ;
No man should seek or wish to be another,
One to whose work he can lay no pretence ;
Go home and think it out—Remember, brother,
That Nature's greatest gift is Common Sense.

Be kind, be true, be generous ; and never
Be harsh or overquick to take offence ;
And do remember, you who are so clever,
That Nature's greatest gift is Common Sense.

Last Year's Fire

PERHAPS twelve months ago we may have sat,
Wholly unconscious of our future fate,
With well-filled scuttle standing on the mat,
And red and golden flames within the grate ;
What then more cosy than our little room
Which seemed to leave no unfulfilled desire ?
But now the grate is cold and in the gloom
We cannot warm our hands at last year's fire.

You think this verse well suited to the time,
But it applies, alas ! to every age ;
There is no era and there is no clime
Where Fortune stays for ever on Life's stage.
Your sun may shine, your skies be azure blue,
You may gain all to which you can aspire ;
But none the less the solemn thought is true :—
You cannot warm your hands at last year's fire.

A Funny Dream

I FELL asleep the other day
And, sleeping dreamt a dream :
I fancied that I asked my way
To where a snow-bound city lay
• Upon a frozen stream ;
“ St. Petersburg,” I called the place :
The man I spoke to pulled a face.

I realized my own mistake :
“ No, Petrograd, I mean.”
He laughed until his sides did ache,
He was amused, I ween :
“ Oh ! well then—Leningrad,” I cried.
But with a smile the man replied :

“ You’re getting on, Sir, but I fear
You still are out of date.
We are, you may be pleased to hear,
A hyper-modern State ”—
He made me an ironic bow—
“ We call it A. J. Cooksgrad now.”

Dissimilarity in Nature

WITHIN a forest there are countless trees,
Some of them, too, are really very big,
And many leaves are seen upon each twig—
I cannot say how many leaves one sees.
Now scientists inform us, if you please,
That no two leaves are ever quite the same !
And more than this, no other leaves they claim
Have ever, or will ever, be as these.
It truly is a most stupendous thought
That since the pterodactyls flew about,
The world has had no second leaf to show
Quite like the one I hold. Of course we ought
To trust our scientists who have no doubt,
Still—how the “ Pickwick’s Author ” do they know ?

.The Water Chute

I STROLLED at Weston to the Birnbeck Pier,
They charge you two pence for the right of entry ;
I paid this sum—which is not very dear—
To a gate-keeper, somewhat like a sentry.
And there I saw two girls—irresolute—
With crowds of other persons round them flocking ;
When next I saw them—on the Water Chute—
I recognized the darn in one silk stocking.
This done, I took my station on a seat
From whence I viewed in comfort and at leisure,
The progress of my two Westonian Graces.
Of course I hope that they enjoyed their treat,
And I am told the Chute gives people pleasure,
Which only proves one cannot judge by faces.

The Prophets

WHEN people tell me as they sometimes do
Of what is sure to happen by and by,
Of some wild storm next time the Moon is New,
Or of some dangerous comet in the sky ;
The truly awful things that I am told
The next few years are going to bring along
Would be enough to make my blood run cold
Had not the prophets been so often wrong.

Of course we know the world must end some day—
Which some may think is not a cause for sorrow—
But granting that, is it too bold to say
That probably the sun will rise to-morrow ?
And if it does and many more days after,
May we not greet it with a cheerful song ?
There would, indeed, be little cause for laughter
Had not the prophets been so often wrong.

I understand that sometimes through the ages
Men have been so convinced the end was nigh,
By placing faith in self-appointed sages
That they have sown no barley, wheat or rye ;
And then they had a famine—little wonder !
One must have food to feed our mighty throng,
And we might go and make the self-same blunder
Had not the prophets been so often wrong.

The world is very, very full of folly,
And human intellects are none too strong ;
For me, I should be deeply melancholy
Had not the prophets been so often wrong.

Lighting a Fire

HAVE you ever tried to light a fire that won't ?
If you have, you will know just what I mean ;
And if you haven't, take my advice and don't ;
For if you do, it will surely raise your spleen.
The paper may burn, and even the wood may char,
The smoke will begin to curl and your hopes to rise,
But then the flame will fade into one bright star
At which you blow till you get the dust in your eyes.
You seize the bellows and puff at a frantic pace,
And as you are blowing the last faint spark goes out ;
Then up you spring from the grate with a smutty face,
And say a few words that don't sound very devout.
I know of nothing on earth that raises one's ire
So much as trying to kindle an obstinate fire.

"A Paradox"

WHEN our friends leave us, do we love them more,
Or do we love them less, or just the same ?
When they are dwelling on some distant shore
To have them back again becomes our aim.
When they are at our side as heretofore
To weary of them were indeed a shame !
So shall we say that friends can never bore ?
In that case—many are but friends in name.
The truth is that both opposites are true,
A paradox on which we well may ponder ;
Yet in our nation's proverbs we can find
It is a paradox the old folk knew :
One says that " absence makes the heart grow fonder,"
Another " out of sight is out of mind."

When Summer-Time Ends

.

WE now have reached that time of year
Which men have named the Equinox,
And so the day is drawing near
When we must alter all our clocks.

Then ten o'clock will be but nine,
And nine o'clock will be but eight ;
A thing which really does seem fine
For such as come to breakfast late.

So let us dance and let us sing
To make the winter bright and fair ;
And when we once more reach the Spring
Only the sleepy-heads will care.

Evolution

SURELY mankind would rather rise than fall:
Even supposing man was once an ape,
Why need it trouble him, this early shape ?
He has advanced beyond it—that is all.
Once, possibly, we used to fight and squall,
Or climb some lofty tree to sit and gape ;
Those were the days from which we now escape
To grow in mental stature fair and tall.
Not fallen we from high and heavenly lands,
They are our destination and our goal,
They are the home to which we must aspire.
Not sunk to what we are from angel bands,
But rather beings with a widening soul
And hearts that bid us struggle ever higher.

A Song of Love

I MUST arise and go to thee
And sing thee songs of praise,
For thou art all in all to me
In these bright sunny days.

I will not stay where roses grow
Nor pace the cool green glades,
Nor will I wander to and fro
Amidst the forest shades.

I will not sit beside the brook
To watch the ripples glisten,
Nor rest within some dreamy nook
Where the bees hum—to listen.

I must arise and go to thee
And sing thee songs of praise,
For thou art more than all to me
In these bright sunny days.

The Nun

HAPPILY shone the rising sun ;
The mists from the valley had flown ;
Over opposite stood the Nun
In the Cloisters all alone.
The cloudlets glowed with a crimson stain
In the light of the morning red :
“ All things bud and blossom again,
But to me all things are dead.”

The Cats

(Free translation from the blank verse of T. Storm)

A YEAR ago, in May, my good old cat
Brought to the world six darling little kittens
Completely white, except for short black tails ;
It was indeed a charming sight to see them.
My cook, however—cooks are really gruesome,
And Mercy seldom dwells within a kitchen—
Seized upon five and was about to drown them,
To drown five pretty little black-tailed kittens !
I promptly intervened—and Heaven blessing
My kindly efforts, all the darling kittens
Grew up, and wandered over house and garden
And sat at midnight just outside my window
Seeking to serenade me with their voices,
As if to thank me for my kindly action.
A year has passed—they are no longer kittens
But full-grown cats, and—how can I describe it !
My house is now a perfect town of kittens ;
In every spot from cellar unto attic,
In drawers and baskets, under beds and tables
I find—no, it is really past description !
Each cat has now a nest with seven kittens
Completely white, except for short black tails.
The cook is mad ! Her fury has no limit,
She wishes now to drown all nine and forty !
And I, who view with horror such an action,
Am all confusion—how can I continue
With six and fifty cats to grace my household ?

A Sparrow's Petition

(After Richard Schmidt-Cabanis)

Most highly honoured Man hear this my prayer :
When winds blow cold and snow is in the air,
And bitter frost has hardened all the ground,
The food we seek for can no more be found.

Remember at this festive time of year
The tiny birds who have no Christmas Cheer,
Throw us such morsels as you cannot miss
And take a little birdie's thanks for this.

I like the crumbs myself, but be it known
That many birds enjoy to peck a bone,
My friend the Blue Tit loves a piece of marrow
Believe me,
Ever your most grateful,
Sparrow.

(Three poems after the French of E. Boulay-Paty)

The Two Wrestlers

Two wrestlers struggle fiercely night and day,
For dauntless courage they are both renowned,
Which is the stronger none can surely say
Though with success the younger first is crowned.
The elder athlete, gaunt, without remorse,
Of livid tint, void it appears of breath,
With sunken eyes and arms of rigid force,
Yet rests unconquered—they are Man and Death.
Then slowly Death obtains the upper hand ;
Man falls at length beneath his sallow foe ;
Death towers above him saying : “ He is dead !
His glory was but as the shifting sand ! ”
Then Man springs up, armed with his soul, and lo !
Triumphs at last, just when all hope had fled.

The Antique Mirror

MIRROR whose frame grows tarnished with the years,
Crowned yet with interwoven leaves and flowers,
What eyes have shone from thee in by-gone hours !
Where are they now ? My own are dimmed with tears.
Thou hast reflected truly grave and gay,
Beauty and strength alike thy glass has shown,
Youth with the roses that have bloomed and blown,
Roses that should be asphodels to-day.
Thou wilt retain no line of my own face,
No vaguest dream of what is in that glass ;
The look I see reflected there will pass
And of its memory there will rest no trace.
But other forms unknown will pass thee by,
Be mirrored in those phantom depths—and die.

. The Old Man

My vision fails, my strength is all but spent,
My footsteps totter and a wintry rime
Is on my hair, my frame is weak and bent,
But though age comes I do not bow to time.
Each moment that is born slips to the past,
Yet in the skies the same bright stars still glisten ;
Something there is in Nature that will last,
A voice is ever heard for such as listen.
I feel a sense of youth through all my age,
A boundless force in all my feebleness ;
Of Life's great book I have but read one page,
What the next tells I can but vaguely guess.
But with the eyes of faith I seem to see
The endless realms of God's eternity.

Appendix

The Forger

(After the German of Johann Gabriel Seidl)

The beadle came before the Judge : " My Lord, there waits outside

A man whose face is haggard, who will not be denied ;
He says he is a criminal, his eyes are wild and sad,
And if he is not really one, I think he must be mad."

" Let him be brought," the Judge replied, " bring him before me here."

" My Lords," began the stranger, " lend me a gracious ear ;

It is your solemn office to hear and to condemn,
And you must listen to my crimes and punish me for them.

Which do you call the greatest crime ? " " Murder," the Judge replied ;

" The second greatest ? "—" Treason," " and then ? " the stranger cried,

" The next, I think, is forgery." " Ah ! stop, that is the name ;

Forgery, you have called it ; of that I bear the shame.

" Forgery, you have called it ; that is my Lords the word.

And yet you wish to spare me because you place it third ;
I tell you even murder is not so foul an act ;

A forger ; there is nothing can extenuate the fact."

" Forgery ! " cried the Judges, " where do you forge and how ?

If you should have accomplices expose and name them now."

" My Lords, do not dissemble," he replied with scornful looks,

And let your eyes be on me and not upon your books.

" Know you the shattered remnants of Love and Joy's desire,

The faded flowers of summer, the quenched extinguished fire ?

I captured a fair child, too pure and gentle far

To guess in her deep innocence how wicked some men are.

" This maiden gave her heart to me, she gave her love, her all ;

And what did I return to her but bitterness and gall ? "

I forged for her the falsest vows, lies of the deepest hue,
I forged for her the falsest tears, she took them all for true.

" They were all false, unreal—the stories that I told ;

I forged a gilded virtue, she thought that it was gold ;

She seemed so rich, she made parade of all the things I gave,

And when Time disillusioned her, she sank into her grave.

" Murder, my Lords, what is it ? the iron quickly kills ;

And treason strikes upon the spot with its attendant ills ;

But forgery degrades the soul, keeps faith in, keen suspense,

It breaks the heart, and poisons trust ; it is the worst offence.

" Now let me hear your sentence ; it is my only prayer ;

The weight of such dishonour is more than I can bear. .

Nightly a voice keeps calling me this crime to expiate ;
But restitution cannot be—the sum is far too great.”

The Judges stood and shuddered, then with one voice
they cried

“ This is a case above us, which we may not decide ;
We do not judge the Conscience, we only judge the deed ;
Before the Court of Heaven it is false hearts must plead.”

The stranger laughed out grimly, then wept and laughed
again :

“ Oh ! wretched soul ” he clamoured, “ that men will
not arraign ”

He went ; the expiation withheld by human breath,
After long years of sorrow, he found at length—in Death.

The Hour of Sorrow

No gleam of sunshine lights the mournful day
Beneath November's sombre shroud of gloom ;
Gone is the charm of summer ; grace and bloom
Irrevocably lost and past away.

The coming year brings forth another flower, c
But not the one we loved ; for mortal eye
Will nevermore behold the days that die
Nor can Eternity repeat one hour.

But let us not repine ; because, my friend,
Our joys and sorrows, happiness and pain,
Alike are transient. One and all must blend
Into the greater life ; and not in vain
Have been the storms, the thunder and the rain,
If all dissolve to azure in the end.

To a Piece of Bath Colite

SMALL lump of stone formed out of myriad shells,
What wondrous story could'st thou now unfold
If only thou could'st speak.

Here, where the wild winds shriek
Over the hill-top, has the ocean rolled.
Within my mind the salt sea heaves and swells ;
Under the dawn of prehistoric days,
I see the golden rays,

Shot by the rising sun across the waves,
Fall on the ancient beach ; and rocks and caves
That marked the lonely shore reflect the light.
I see the pallid moon, the stars at night,
Though not indeed the groups I know to-day,
Shine on the foam and spray.

I see these tiny shells endowed with life ;
Only of men no trace.

And it is well to utterly efface
For one brief instant thus all human strife ;
To watch the dwellers of that long-gone time
Live their short lives, and sinking in the slime
Of the dark ocean bed, build up the hills
Of the unconscious future. So may we
Ignorant as men are, be building, too,
In the vast Universe a world to be
Far greater than the best we ever know ;
Since thus it is that Destiny fulfils
Things hardly dreamed of.

The Silver Streak

(A River Phantasy)

THE silver streak is the gleaming ray
That falls where the waters lie cold and grey
Beneath the bow of our gliding boat.
But why do I speak of the silver streak
That is both so near and so remote ?
We row and row, but as we go,
The silver streak for ever recedes.
So on through the slimy water-weeds,
Between high banks where the willows weep
And the river itself appears to sleep
In many a drowsy, dreamy creek,
We follow the path of the silver streak.
And round our boat the swallow wings
His circling flight, and the blackbird sings
His merry notes from amidst the may,
And the banks are green and the flowers are gay.
Yet to my heart comes a stab of pain
For that which I seek and seek in vain
For the heights I strive for and cannot attain
But when the merry revellers come
To ask me why I am looking so glum ;
I brush the unseen tear from my cheek
And laugh ! and point to the silver streak.

The Mountain

ONE day I clambered up a mountain side
Till like a map the world lay stretched below ;
The broken rocks around spread far and wide,
Above me rose the everlasting snow.
The evening sun took on a crimson glow
Ere I an old and white-haired man espied :
" Is the top far above us, here " I cried,
" How many hundred feet have I to go " ?

And he replied : " The name this mountain bears
Is Knowledge ; I myself am often known
As Wisdom. But the day is nearly done,
And they that clamber here must go alone.
Great the reward of him who does and dares ;
But summit to this mountain there is none."

The Key

(12th Century)

I AM thine and thou art mine
So must it ever be.
Locked up thou art
Within my heart,
To nevermore be free ;
For I have lost the key.

The Three Catspaws

THREE gentlemen sat in a very high place,
And each thought his own the unluckiest case
That a ruler had ever been called on to face ;
For the life of all three seemed a most dismal thing !
There was Emperor Charles and Ferdie the King
And Mehmed the Sultan of Turkey.

And Emperor Charles said : " We all shall soon starve ;
I sit at my table with nothing to carve !
And sooner or later I know we must lose ;
I would much rather be in some other man's shoes ;
For my life seems to me a most dismal thing ! "
Said Emperor Charles to Ferdie the King
And Mehmed the Sultan of Turkey.

And Ferdie the King sighed : " Alas ! and alas !
That I should have been such a terrible ass
To allow myself thus to be drawn into war ;
I really can't think what I did the thing for ;
All the thanks I get for it are growls and snarls."
Said Ferdie the King to the Emperor Charles
And Mehmed the Sultan of Turkey.

And Mehmed the Sultan replied : " Can't you see
That that scamp of a Wilhelm has duped us all three ?
He has lost you your dinners and lost me Bagdad ;
And I really must say that I think it too bad !
If I ever get clear of this dastardly war
For the future my motto is—' Never no more ! '
This fighting to me is a most dismal thing."
To Emperor Charles and Ferdie the King
Answered Mehmed the Sultan of Turkey.

May, 1917

A Chloride of Sodium Story

A CERTAIN old woman once had a sore throat ;
So she sat down and wrote
A polite little note
To her family doctor, a famous concoctor
Of physic, to ask for his learned advice ;
But she did not desire to pay a high price
To have his drugs flavoured to make them taste nice !
The doctor replied that a glass of warm water
With Sodium Chloride, he thought would suffice—
One teaspoonful mixed as a gargle.

Alas !

Neither the poor old thing nor her daughter,
Although knowing well the words " water " and " glass "
Had ever before heard of Sodium Chloride.
So off they both set, although it was wet,
To the family chemist two miles away,
Who, when they arrived, had shut up for the day.
But the old woman rang the emergency bell.
And begged and entreated the chemist to tell
If he had any Sodium Chloride to sell.
" We do keep it, Madam," the chemist replied ;
" Just bring in the salt-cellar, Thomas," he cried.

In Commemoration of the 2d. Post.

WITH certain twinges of regret
Men call to mind the penny post ;
Though possibly they still may get
The letters that they value most.
Our real friends, I think, will stay
And those who honestly adore us ;
Acquaintances will drop away
With those who don't care twopence for us.

And that is why I feel such pleasure
In writing to you all to-day,
To use the moments of my leisure
To wish you well and just to say :
That whether you admire this skit
Or find my verses simply bore you,
In honesty you must admit
I do at least care twopence for you.

(From the Bath and Wilts Chronicle, 2nd June, 1920)

Take Things as They Come

If you need a little moral
For a useful, happy life,
Where you never fight or quarrel
With your family or wife ;
If you want to be contented
Though the folk around look glum
And to never feel tormented
You must take things as they come.

Life is full of care and trouble,
Yet we should not mope and moan,
Lest, perchance, we wrongly double
Other's sadness by our own ;
We must smile, my friend, and bear it,
And make hope a constant chum ;
If our friends meet sorrow—share it,
But yet take things as they come.

The Little Philosopher

(From the German of Max Möller)

THE hour of eight was striking in the tower,
The farm-yard gate was fastened for the night,
The last bee hovered o'er the closing flower,
The sleepy swallows winged their homeward flight.

Blood-red the sun had vanished in the west,
The reaper left the field to seek repose ;
Only the little Anna, fully dressed,
Watched from the window-sill the long day close.

Suddenly through the dusk her mother came :
“ Hullo ! my darling, what is this I see ?
Not gone to bed, you naughty little dame ?
Now, dearest, you must come along with me.”

But Anna pointed to the crimson sky,
Where the bright evening star began to peep :
“ Ah ! Mother, it is early ; by and by
When I am tired let me go to sleep.”

“ No ! no ! my angel, it is very late ;
See, dearest one, the sun has gone to rest ;
Did you not just now hear the clock strike eight ?
The chickens, look ! are going to their nest.”

The small philosopher peeped down and said :
“ It is no wonder, mother, if they do ;
Of course the little chickens go to bed
Because the mother birds are going too.”

The Arabs and the Devil

(From the German of Friedr. Rückert)

THE Arabs had finished tilling the fields,
When the Devil arrived in a hurry there ;
He said : " Half the world to me man yields,
Of the harvest I also will have my share."

BUT Arabs are ever astoundingly sly ;
They said : " The lower half shall be thine."
The Devil, who hankers after the sky,
Said : " No ! the upper half must be mine."

The Arabs planted carrots and beet,
And when the time for division came,
The Arabs took the roots to eat,
But the Devil had the leaves for his claim.

A little later on in the year,
The Devil said, with angry scorn :
" The lower half shall belong to me here "——
And the Arabs planted wheat and corn.

Then, when the division came again,
The Arabs carried away the grain,
The Devil got only the stubble——and so
He used it for heating the furnace below.

L'enboi

WHEN we have reached the close
Of a long, happy, well-spent summer day,
We put our toys away,
And gladly welcome silence and repose.
Then sinks each weary head
Upon its downy bed,
Till one by one our wakeful senses all have fled.

When we have reached the end
Of a long, useful, well-spent, noble life,
We turn away from strife,
Seeking no more with Nature to contend.
Nor need we vainly sigh
That life has then passed by;
They that have loved and lived are not afraid to die.

